

## Walpole in the Revolution

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On Wednesday, September 21, 1768, this record was set down in the Town Book of Walpole. "Voted that they send One Person to join the committees at Faneuil Hall. Joshua Clapp was chosen and appointed for said purpose." It is one of the most significant entries in all the town records, for it gives notice that Walpole is prepared to join forces with the patriots of America to prevent a usurpation of the people's rights.

The situation in Massachusetts was critical. The efforts of England to lay taxes upon the Colonists had aroused resistance throughout the land. The laws, which were held by the Americans to be unjust, illegal, and unwarranted, were openly ignored and evaded. So high did public feeling run, that the King's Commissioners of Customs, who made their headquarters at Boston, had removed themselves and their families to Castle William on Castle Island, for fear of violence. "It is impossible for us to set foot in Boston until there are two or three regiments in the town to restore and support Government." Sir Francis Bernard, Royal Governor of the Province, appealed to the home government and they ordered troops to Boston. On September 12, a special town meeting at Boston demanded of Bernard that he call an immediate session of the General Court so that it might consider the grave situation brought about by the prospect of being quartered among the people. He refused. Bernard's refusal was met by the townspeople with a general call to all the towns of Massachusetts to send representatives to Faneuil Hall on September 22 to consider measures for peace and safety of the people. It was in response to this request the Joshua Clapp was appointed to represent Walpole. He joined the representatives of ninety-six towns and eight districts in an address to Bernard deploring the fact "That a Standing Army is immediately to be introduced among the people" contrary to the Bill of Rights, and asking that the General Assembly, the representative body of the people, be called together.

Bernard called upon it to immediately dissolve, declaring it as a "notorious violation" of the constituted authority of the Province. His threats had no effect on the delegates and they remained in session, an outlawed body until a few days before the British troops came sailing into the harbor on September 28, 1768. The coming of the Redcoats was a challenge, not only to Boston but to every town in America. Walpole's answer was a new interest in affairs outside her own boundary. This was the first time she sent a representative to the General Court. But now, with critical times ahead, she rose to the emergency. On May 29, 1769, the people elected Captain Seth Kingsbury to be their first Representative. The Provincial Congress requested the towns to withhold payment of tax money to Hon. Harrison Gray, the Provincial Treasurer under the crown, instead, to make payments to the newly appointed Receiver-General, Henry Gardner, of Stow. The towns were urged to make payments to him in order that provision might be made against "imminent dangers" that confronted the people. Once again did Walpole speedily lend its support to the patriot cause. Its people pledged themselves to indemnify the Selectmen and Assessors for any damage arising from their refusal to make payments to Grey, and also to stand back of the Constables Abner Turner and Samuel Guild, for paying money to Henry Gardner.

From now on we see Walpole taking an active part in every history-making movement. When it was reported that the Royal Governor Thomas Hutchinson (successor to Bernard) and Massachusetts judges were to be paid from the Royal Treasury, thus making them independent of the people, the Selectmen of Walpole were petitioned to call a Special Town Meeting in January, 1773, for the "Consideration of many Grievances that the Province and Colonies Labour under..." They appointed a committee to draft instructions to guide their representative in his actions. This committee was made up of Ensign Seth Bullard, Enoch Ellis, Dr. Samuel Cheney, George Paysen, and Aguilé Robbins. Under Samuel Adams' direction, the towns were stirred to action. Thus we find the towns, Walpole among them, acting in concert in matters of Public Welfare -- the beginnings of an American Union. There was a breathing spell at this point, a spell that was to be broken after more than a year by the Boston Tea Party and the Boston Port Bill. But in this interval Walpole prepared for what many could see for the future.

On May 20, 1773, the Town appropriated five pounds to build a powder house. It was to be six foot square and six foot between joints. It was to be set "on the Widow Robbins' High Hill if she will consent to it." Yes, the Widow consented, and to this day, the Hill is known as Powder House Hill. In June, 1774, with armed conflict fast approaching the town voted to add 150 pounds of weight of Good Gunpowder and flints in Proportion to the stock of ammunition.

By this time, the Port Bill, closing the Port of Boston to commerce, was in effect. Then came the regulating acts providing that members of the General Court should be appointed by the King, instead of being nominated by the Representatives. Town meetings were illegal, but Walpole held one on August 29 and chose "deligats" to meet committees of other town in Suffolk County "in order to consult measures Proper to be taken for the safety of the County." These meetings were held in private homes.

On December 30, 1774, the town voted: that one quarter part of the Training Band Soldiers should be enlisted in the Province Service to be ready at a minute's warning. That these minute-men should be paid out of the town's treasury -- two shillings per day for each day that they shall be called together and exercised in Military Art and discipline. The Town chose a committee of three to say how often the minute men shall be called together and also how many hours they shall train in one day. This committee shall view the soldiers to see whether they be able-bodied men. Interesting records show our Town early assuming the burdens true patriotism always brings. Several Town meetings were held before and after the Battle of Concord and Lexington, but no mention is made of any unusual anxiety. It should be mentioned that out of a population of less than 800, we sent one hundred and fifty-seven men, who, on the beat of the alarm drum on that glorious morning followed Seth Bullard over the fields to Concord. Their course was through Medfield, Dover and Sherborn. Two companies, with 25 who joined a Medfield Company, formed our patriotic contribution to that noble beginning of our struggle for independence. A Muster Roll of a Militia Company of Walpole in Col. John Smith's Regiment marched in consequence of the alarm on April 19, 1775. These 157 men must have taken nearly all the able-bodied men in the town.

The muster rolls show that some of the Walpole men who took up arms on the 19th quit after four days; the longest term of service is shown as about 11 days. But many of these men promptly returned to the ranks in response to a call of the Mass. Provincial Congress, which on

April 23, voted to raise a force of 30,000 men for the defense of the Province...

The gathering of the forces for the siege of Boston brought to Walpole the greatest bustle and excitement it ever experienced. Rhode Island and Connecticut troops were constantly passing through the town -- in August it is recorded "300 pass. 3 Comp. Conn. men" and another day, "Large cannon from Providence." The month of September brought Walpole a then obscure Captain in Connecticut service, whose name was destined to go down in the rolls of the immortals, Nathaniel Hale.

Captain Aaron Guild, with a company of Walpole men, helped to construct Washington's Dorchester Heights entrenchments, which so completely commanded the British-ridden town of Boston, that it was evacuated by the enemy without delay. (March 17, 1776)

In December, 1777, came an alarm from Rhode Island. A British fleet had come into Narragansett Bay and anchored in Newport Harbor. On the 8th, Governor Cooke of Rhode Island sent a dispatch to General Washington, saying that the British had landed that morning and that the Island of Rhode Island was in full possession of the enemy. "I have sent repeated expresses to the Mass. Bay and Connecticut. The forces of the former are on the march..." Two companies of Walpole Minute-men took up their rifles and started "upon an alarm," the other "upon Alarm" as the muster roll tells us -- to answer Governor Cooke's appeal. The company of Joshua Clapp, with Andrew Willett as Lieutenant, mustered 34 officers and men, and that of Captain Oliver Clapp with Eben Fales as Lieutenant, 30 officers and men. These forces stayed in Rhode Island about three weeks. When the companies started home, five men of each company were drafted to remain an additional three weeks to reinforce the State troops. The British threw up extensive fortification and held on until 1780, a constant threat not only to Rhode Island, but Massachusetts and Connecticut as well. Not only was it necessary to keep a large force opposed to the invaders, but at every threatened offensive the Minute Men were called upon to march. In both cases Walpole made her contributions. Thus, in December, 1778, we find the Selectmen taking oath that the town had raised seven able-bodied men to serve at Rhode Island for a term of six months, and had paid each L 14 as a bounty.

Strenuous efforts had been made by the town to see that its representation of 9-months and 3-year men were recruited for Washington's Army, operating to the southward. It was voted in February, 1777, that "The men that served the Continent and State at Roxbury and the Places adjacent should be allowed 13 shillings and 4 pence per month; those that served at New York and Ticonderoga 3 pounds per month, and those that served at Warwick the same as those at Roxbury." The town appointed a committee to see if any men were disposed to enlist. They found few so disposed; and a week later it was deemed to vote 14 pounds, in addition to State and Continental bounties, to all who enlisted before March 1st. Another committee was appointed to collect funds with which to pay this bounty. But raising money was found to be as hard a task as raising men, and it was necessary to borrow on the Town's account, at interest.

There were artillery men from Walpole who served under General Washington when he crossed the Delaware, and later at the Battle of Monmouth. There were men from Walpole with Washington's armies through the periods of all campaigns. There is a story of Holland Wood -- one day a battle was going against the Americans; he drew off a cannon from the field without

assistance, thereby preventing its loss to the enemy. Wood was a large and capable man, fully capable of doing the work thus credited to him. Josiah Barden was in the Battle of Trenton and in after years told of his experiences. At one time a soldier near him was struck by a bullet which passed through his canteen. "Damn them, they have spoiled my canteen," he exclaimed, and the next moment he fell dead at Barden's side.

David Wilkinson of Walpole was under Benedict Arnold when he went over to the enemy and saw Washington when he returned to camp and learned of the treason.

There were soldiers credited to Walpole who were natives of other places, hired men. One came from far-away Ireland and their best rendition (or possibly it was wholly the fault of the company clerk), was War Pool or War Pole. These War Poolites were at Valley Forge; on one occasion in 1780, the town agreed to pay 1500 pounds each to two French soldiers that were hired for 6 months.

On November 30th, 1782, in France between representatives of England and America, papers were signed, in which the Independence of the United States was recognized and the Revolutionary War was brought to an end.

There was rejoicing throughout the land (America) when the Revolutionary War ended, and Walpole joined with much fervor. A Peace Ball was held in the Ebenezer Fales house on Kendall Street. This house was destroyed by fire in 1922...

--for the Walpole D.A.R.

--October, 1962